Bill to Prevent the Dedication of Women to Hindu Temples in the State of Cochin.

President.—Mrs. G. Pavitran will introduce the Bill to Prevent the Dedication of Women to Hindu Temples in the State of Cochin.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I beg to introduce my Bill to Prevent the Dedication of Women to Hindu Temples in the State of Cochin and move that the Bill be read in Council.

Mr. V. Achyuta Menon.—I beg to second it.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—Mr. President and Members of the House:—In seeking permission of this House to introduce the Bill to Prevent the Dedication of Women to Hindu Temples in the State of Cochin I don't think I need make a speech as it is obvious that the evil which the Bill seeks to abolish is one which no one in this House would like to see perpetuated. What I am urging on the Hon'ble Members of this House is to see that this Bill is placed on the Statute Book without delay.

Whatever might have been the origins of prostitution as an institution and whatever might be the theories of men like Frend and Lecky in justification of the same, it is idle for us to refer to them, much less discuss its adaptability to the conditions in which we live at the present day. It is unthinkable that there should be even any discussion about this subject, much less a division of this House into any Select Committee over it. Custom! Thrice honoured immemorial custom!! What evils have been done in thy name and how many scriptural texts have been quoted to render you sacred and inviolate. The valuable time of this House is not to be wasted in discussing dogmas and splitting hairs about things the evil of which every one recognises.

Indeed this subject ought not to have been allowed to form the subject-matter of a Bill. It did not assume that form in the neighbouring State of Travancore when by a Royal Proclamation —a simple act done in a simple way—an age-long wrong was done away with. Having however come to this House in the shape of a Bill, it is my request to all the Hon'ble Members of this House, not to subject it to the usual processes of a bill. It was not so done in Madras, Mysore or the United Provinces. The objects of the Bill and its provisions, which are but few, were published long ago. The Members have been long acquainted with the full facts of the case. In fact the Bill itself has been mainly the outcome of representations received from responsible members of the dancing girls' community. It is therefore but meet and proper that we should without referring it to a Select Committee, examine the provisions of the Bill one after

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the other here and now and see that it is passed in this Counci itself. I request the Hon'ble Members once more to co-operate with me and enable the House to place the Bill on the Statute Book of our State before we pass on the next item in the agenda.

Mr. C. J. Mathew.—I second it.

President.—It has already been seconded by Mr. V. Achyuta Menon,

Question put.—*That the Bill be read in Council.*

Motion carried.

Secretary to the Council.—The title of the bill is "A Bill to Prevent the Dedication of Women to Hindu Temples in the State of Cochin".

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I request that the Bill be taken into consideration without referring to a Select Committee.

President.—But 15 days should elapse.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I request the president to suspend the operation of the rules under Standing Order 32.

President.—Yes.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I request that the Bill may be considered clause by clause.

Mr. K. P. Kannan Nayar.—Rule 41.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I move that the Bill may be taken into consideration.

Mr. K. Ayyappan.—I second it.

Motion put and agreed to Mr. Harihara Ayyar opposing

Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—Poll, Sir.

President.—I don't think there is need for a poll. Now I shall read the Bill clause by clause. First I shall take the Preamble.

Preamble.—"Whereas the practice of dedicating women to Hindu temples results in such women leading a life of prostitutes, and whereas it is desirable and expedient to terminate the practice of such dedication, it is enacted as follows,"

Question put.—*That this clause, stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

President.—*Short title and extent.*—"1. (a) This act may be called 'The Prevention of Dedication Act.', 1930"

(b) "It extends to the whole of the state of Cochin.

Question put.—*That this clause stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

Mr. A. S. Harihara Ayyar.—Before commencing, I oppose only on principle. I want to see that the Bill goes through the Select Committee.

President.—That rests with the Member.

Dedication of Hindu women to temples declared illegal.—2. "The performance of 'sanctioning chela' and 'wedding to dagger o

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any other similar ceremony, in the precincts of Hindu temples or other places of worship, or elsewhere, with a view to dedicate a Hindu woman is hereby declared illegal and shall be illegal.

Question put.—*That this clause, stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

President.—*Women dedicated may afterwards contract valid marriages.*

3. "A Hindu women who has been dedicated according to section 2 may afterwards enter into a legal marriage and it shall be recognised as valid, notwithstanding any law, custom, or usage to the contrary".

Question put.—*'That this clause stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

President.—*Penalty for dedication of women to Temples.*

4. "Whoever permits, performs, or takes part in the performance or abets the performance of the ceremony of 'sanctioning chela' and 'wedding the dagger' or any other similar ceremony within the precincts of a Hindu Temple, or any other place of worship, or elsewhere, with a view to dedicate any Hindu woman shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year and shall also be liable to a fine not exceeding rupees one thousand".

Question put:— *That this clause, stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—One word with regard to the last section. It would be better, I would leave it to the lady Member, to change the word 'Act' into 'Regulation'.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—We have Regulations instead of Acts.

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I have no objection.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—In the first clause also there is the word 'Act'. These may be changed.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—I second it.

Question put:—*That the word 'Act' may be changed into 'Regulation'.*

Motion carried.

President.—*Saving of penalty provided by other laws.*

5. "Nothing in this Act shall be construed to prevent any person from being liable under sections 352 and 353 of the Cochin Penal Code, or under any other law for the time being in force, or to any other or higher punishment than is provided by this Act; provided that no person shall be prosecuted under this Act, if he was convicted under any of the provisions of law mentioned above".

Question put.—*That this clause stand part of the Bill.*

Motion carried.

Mr. E. Ikkanda Warriar.—There should be one more clause as to when it should come into force.

President.—Is it so very essential that there should be a clause?

Mrs. G. Pavitran.—I move that the Bill may be taken up and passed to-morrow

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Mr. A. B. Salem.—I second it.

Motion put and agreed to.

Cochin Absolute Privilege Bill.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—Before going to the resolutions I would request your leave, Sir, to move for introducing the Cochin Absolute Privilege Bill. The motion for leave to introduce the Bill has already been granted by this House.

Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—Is it in the agenda?

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—It was included in the priliminary agenda. It was not included in the final agenda because notice was not given with respect to the motion that the Bill should be introduced. Under Standing Order 19, sub-section 2, proviso, the President may, in his discretion, admit at any time any motion on shorter notice than that prescribed or may admit any motion without notice.

Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—Has the President admitted the motion?

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—I am requesting the President to admit this motion. This is a short Bill and it has been published in the Gazette.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—I must correct. I don't think it has been published in the Gazette.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—It has been published in the Gazette.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—My information is otherwise. Publication in the Gazette is absolutely necessary before we take up the Bill into consideration.

Mr. A. B. Salem.—May I know, Sir, on a point of order, are not bills generally published after leave for introduction has been granted?

Mr. C. A. Kunjunni Raja.—The publication is after introduction.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—My recollection is that the Bill has been published in the Gazette.

Mr. T. K. Krishna Menon.—Will you kindly give me the date? The Member may have got a copy. That is no publication in the Gazette.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—If the publication in the Gazette is only after the introduction, there is no harm to be done if publication has not been effected now.

President.—The question is whether we have to take up this according to the Rules.

Mr. V. V. Anantapadmanabha Ayyar.—Before the introduction of the Bill only the Members of the House are

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